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CEREBUS mothers & daughters

38



NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

A question I get asked a lot nowadays is: 'Is it possible for a writer to self-publish?' That is to say, if you're not able to write AND draw, is self-publishing still a possibility?

The best I've been able to come up with (and this is largely untried and theoretical) is a yes-and-no answer. In the case of Neil Gaiman, the answer would be 'yes'. Neil Gaiman's *Comics & Stories* would have a lot of box-office appeal and, I'm sure, many artists in the field (myself included) would be lined up for a spot on Neil's roster. For a lesser known writer or an unknown writer, the risks would be greater and the challenge of finding artists to illustrate the stories would increase in inverse proportion. ETHICALLY (and this is just my opinion) you would have to have a shared copyright. The artist would have to have the right to reprint his or her own work, just as the self-publishing artist would have that right, beyond a certain time period (i.e., six months or a year after appearing in the self-publishing writer's anthology). A self-publishing writer who employed artists on a work-made-for-hire basis doesn't strike me as any great improvement on the status quo. I think hubris or karma or whatever you want to call it would bring such a project to a crashing halt (or to Dark Horse, which amounts to the same thing) in pretty short order.

For lesser known or unknown writers, the odds would improve if they were able to limit the length of the stories they wanted to tell. A would-be artist/participant could probably accommodate a three-page or four-page story into a drawing schedule more easily than a twelve- or fifteen-page story. Whether these short short stories were bound together by a common character, theme or subject, or existed independently, is immaterial. If you are looking for an artist to do stories 'on spec', or for very low page rates, or the promise of future royalties, you are going to take a back seat to an assignment that is guaranteed to help pay the rent.

When it comes to a continuing series, graphic novel or an epic-length piece, I think the possibility of a writer self-publishing treads the realm of the impossible. Any artist with ability — hell, competence — in this day and age has no trouble drumming up work somewhere. If the artist has any commercial potential at all, it will be recognized pretty early on in the collaboration and an entry-level page rate at a company is going to look pretty attractive compared to splitting the profits on a black-and-white that's selling two or three thousand copies. If you have to replace the artist, you are now selling a new creative work and you have to start over again from square one.

Most of the collaborations that I've watched founder could be attributed to a lack of interest on the part of the artist. Writers usually forget that the artist is going to be staring at a given page a lot longer than the writer is. While the writer is hell-bent-for-leather to get to that fascinating confrontation in issue five, the artist is on page two of issue three wondering when he or she is going to get something interesting to draw. If you can't draw, you're going to have to keep your stuff interesting for the artist. Most writers don't and they suffer many desertions by collaborators as a result.

Writers do have *one* advantage (what a relief, eh?). Because it takes a lot less time to write a comic book than to draw it, it is possible (and this is, again, theoretical) for the writer to handle all of the business aspects of a collaborative self-published comic. The most common reservation artists have about self-publishing is that they don't want to be bothered with the business side of things. A trade-off is possible here, assuming that both parties have the dedication to see things through. The writer could hold down a full-time job, do the business side and write the stories: one at a time. The would-be self-publishing writer would have to be brutally watchful in this case — make sure the collaborator is producing pages and be ready to ditch him or her at a moment's notice if he or she isn't. It is a very, very long, long shot. You probably have better odds of getting hit by lightning in the next half hour but IF you have the aptitude to write a successful comic book, IF you can make enough at a full-time job to help out with the start-up costs, IF you can find an artist/collaborator who is talented and reliable, IF you can resolve creative differences amicably, and IF neither of you has too many family/friend/outside obligations getting in the way on a regular basis, then it IS possible for a writer to self-publish.

IF any one of those IF's isn't there, then I think you have something less than a prayer of self-publishing successfully.

CEREBUS

NO. 188

NOVEMBER 1994

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice President

LINDA BERZINS
Typesetting

**MOTHERS
&
DAUGHTERS**
a novel

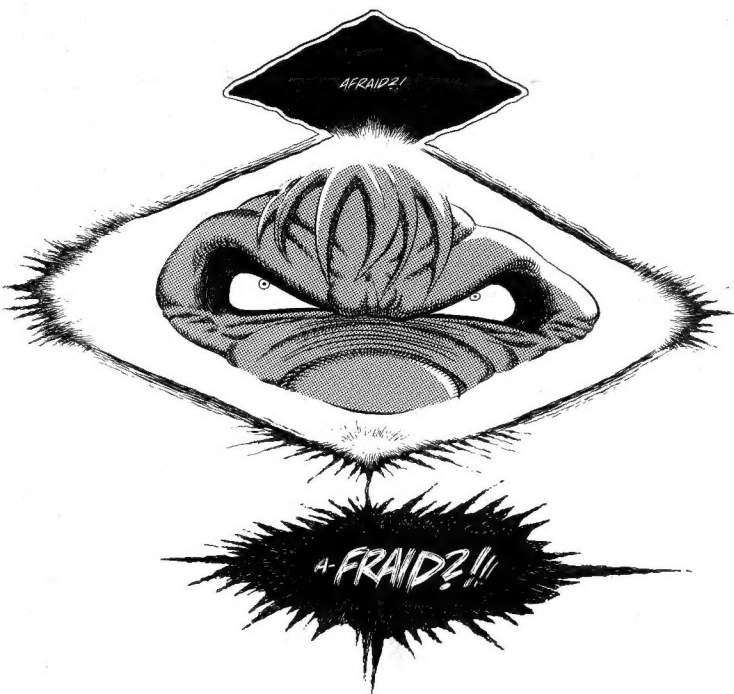
BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 151 to
Cerebus 162)
Flight

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 163 to
Cerebus 174)
Women

BOOK THREE
(Cerebus 175 to
Cerebus 186)
Reads

BOOK FOUR
(Cerebus 187 to
Cerebus 200)
Minds

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O MERCILESS
TARIM!

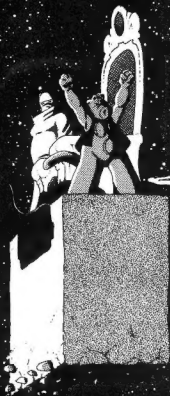


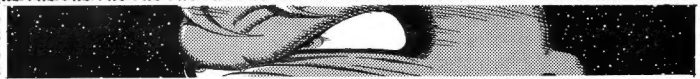
WARRIOR
KING
OF
KINGS



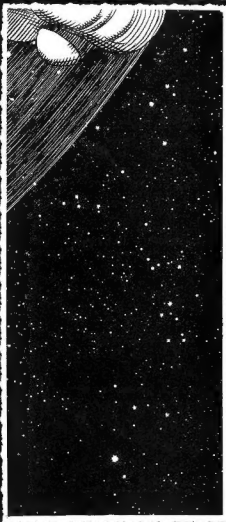
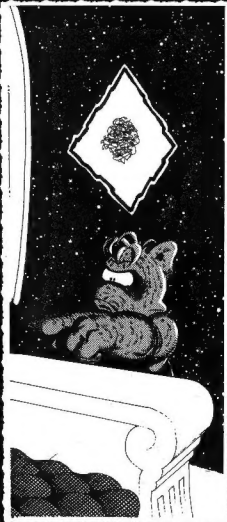
STRIKE!

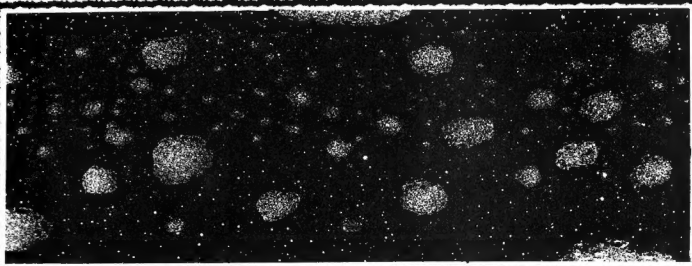
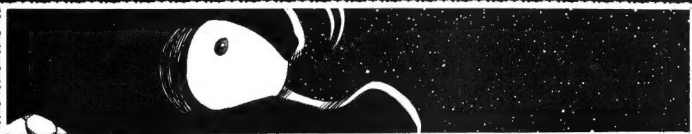
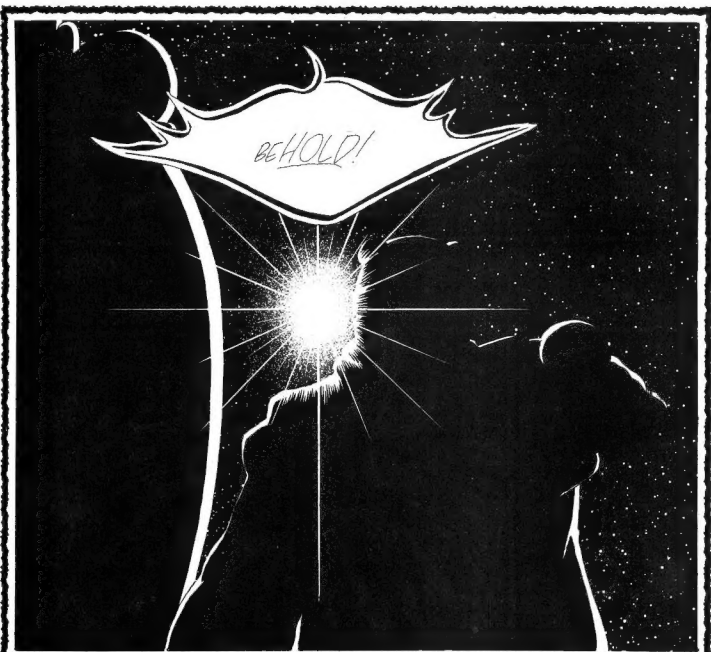
STRIKE
NOW

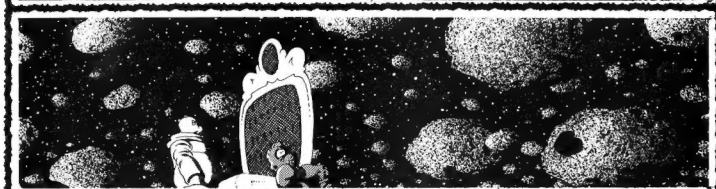
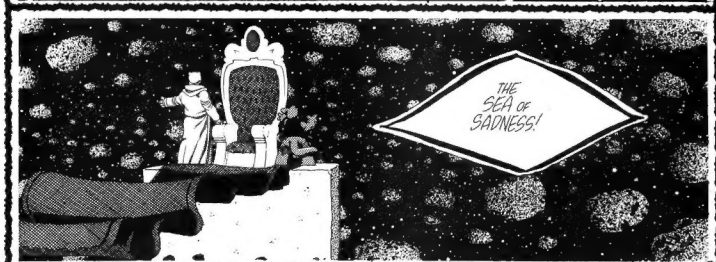
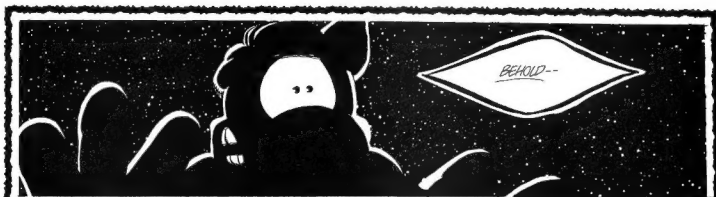


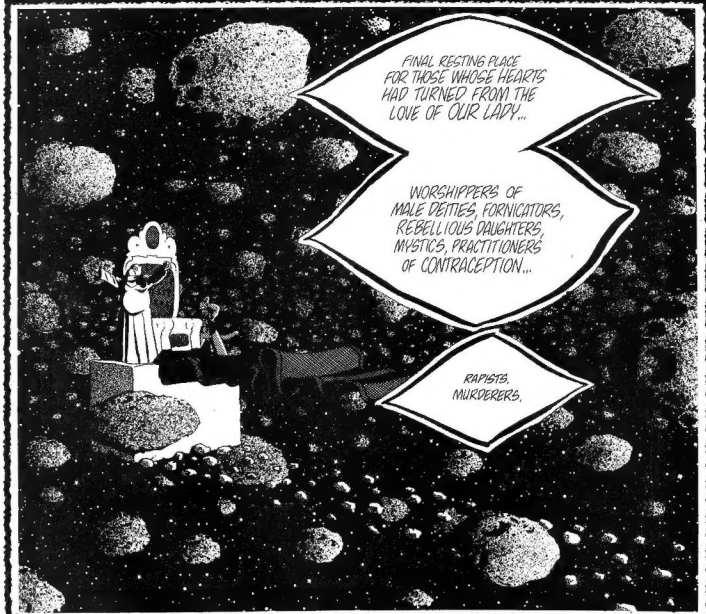








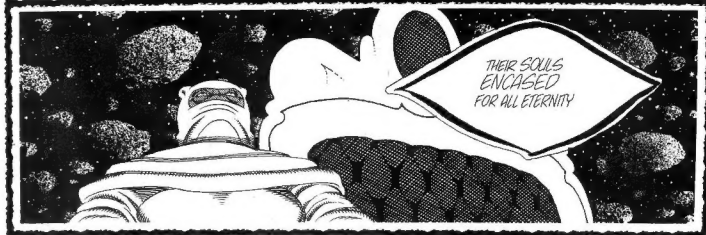




FINAL RESTING PLACE
FOR THOSE WHOSE HEARTS
HAD TURNED FROM THE
LOVE OF OUR LADY...

WORSHIPPERS OF
MALE DEITIES, FORNICATORS,
REBELLIOUS DAUGHTERS,
MYSTICS, PRACTITIONERS
OF CONTRACEPTION...

RAPISTS,
MURDERERS,

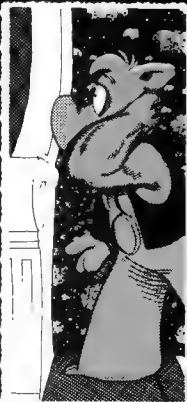


THEIR SOULS
ENCASED
FOR ALL ETERNITY



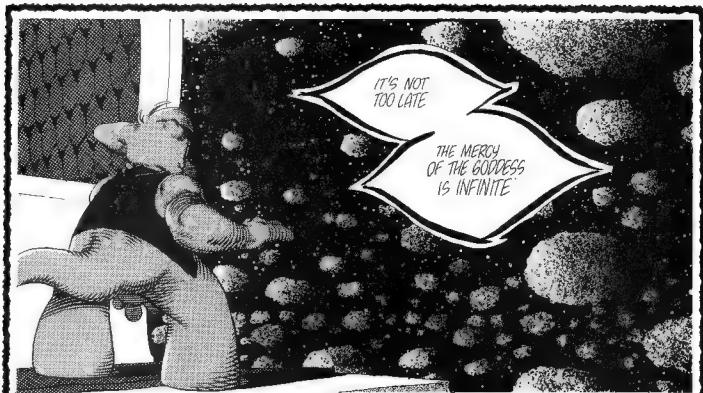
WITHIN THE HARD AND
BITTER ROCK OF THEIR
OWN MAKING...

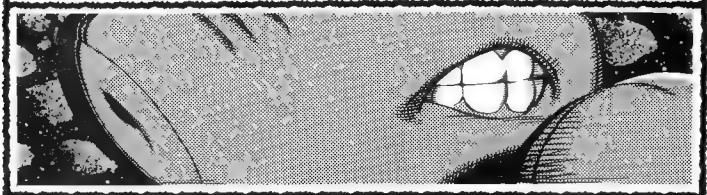
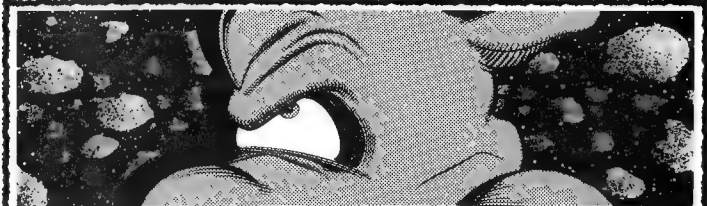
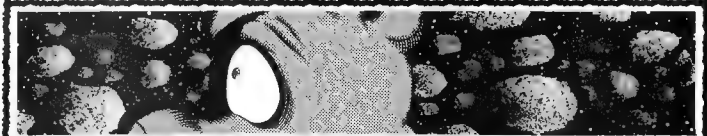
HERE TO REMAIN
UNTIL THE END
OF ALL DAYS!



IS THIS YOUR
CHOICE,
CEREBUS?

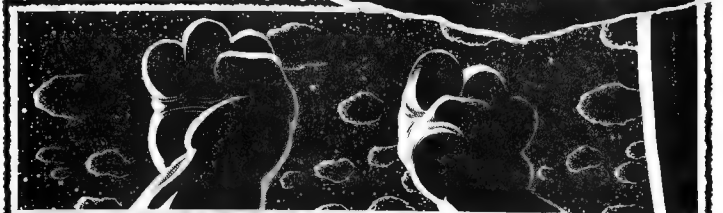
WOULD YOU
JOIN THEM--?
SHARE THEIR
WOE? THEIR
MISERY?







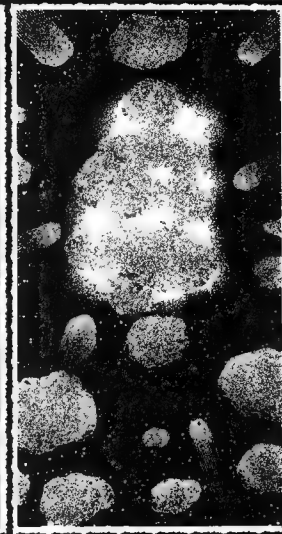
TARIM
DESTROY
THE BLASPHEMER
COW

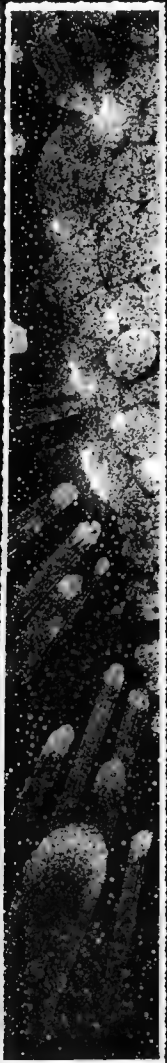
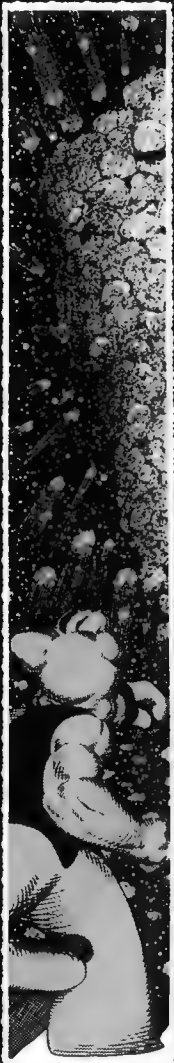
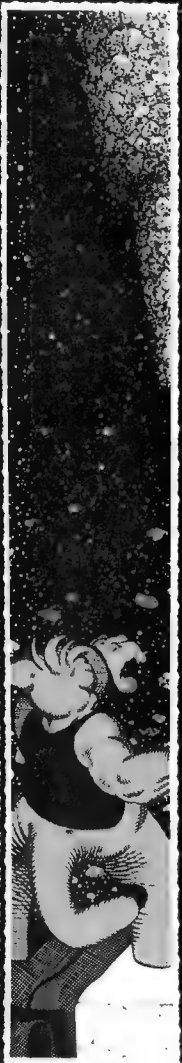


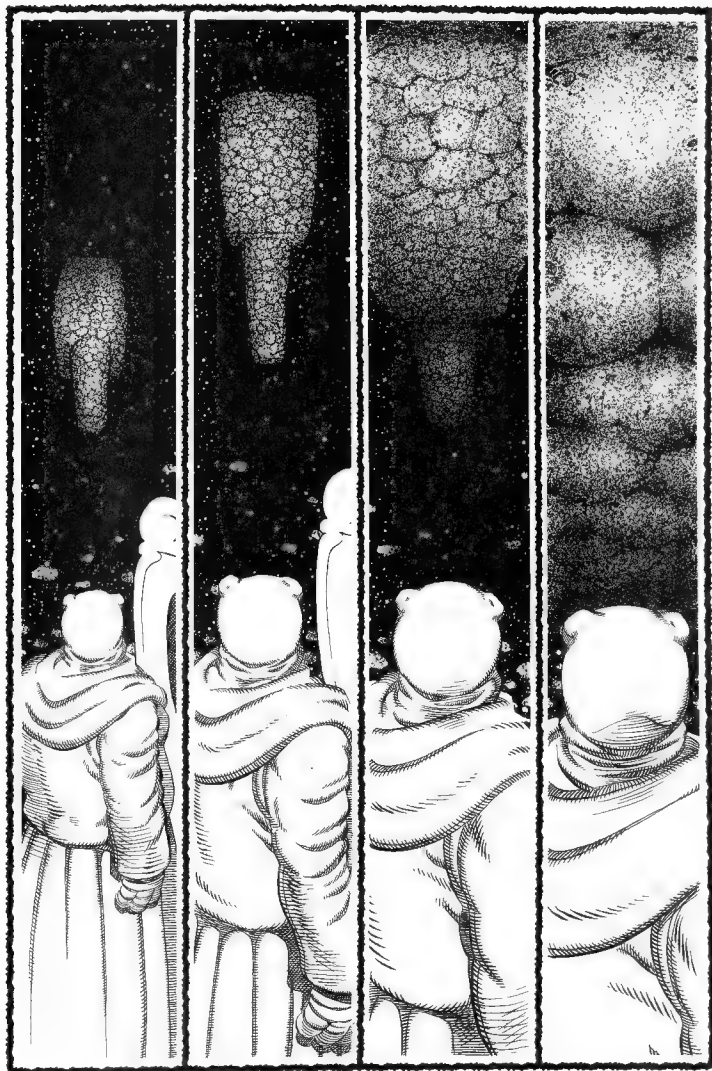
BRING FORTH
A
WEAPON

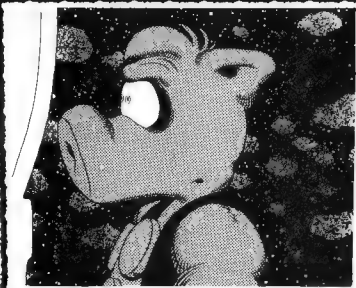
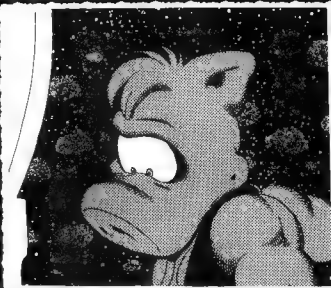
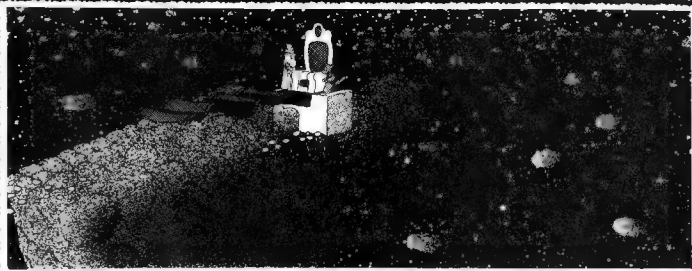
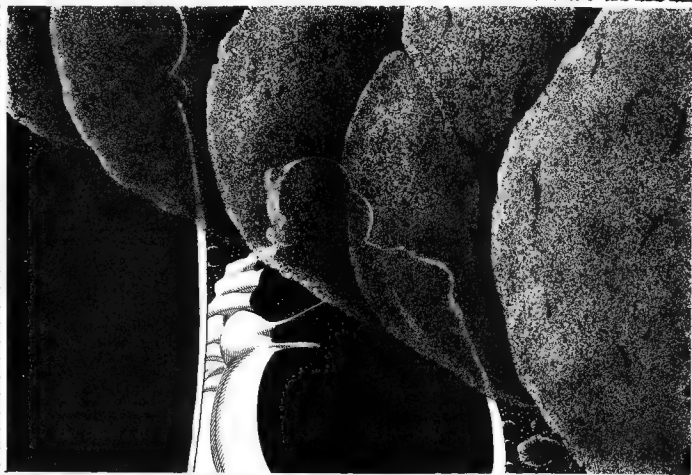


SHOW
THE POWER
THAT--













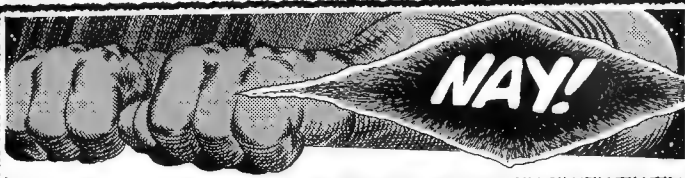
YOU HAVE NO
VALID CLAIM
TO THIS THRONE,
CEREBUS!



YOU WERE
MERELY WEISSHAUPT'S
PUPPET!!

A
POLITICAL
PAWN!!

A
JOKE!!

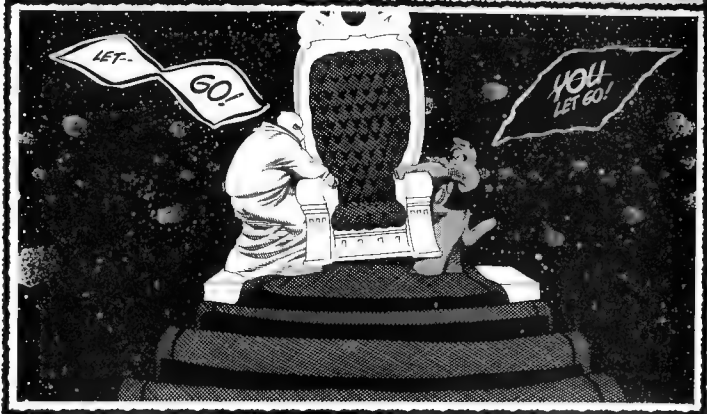
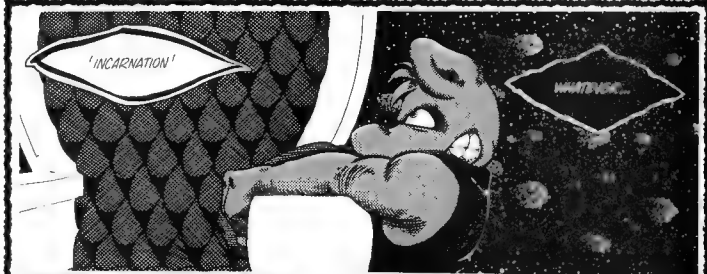


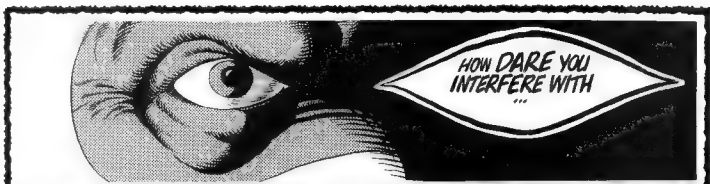
NAY!



IT WAS THE
WILL OF THE
LIVING TARIM
THAT

UNH.-





AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

I've gotten a fair amount of mail recently on the subject of Aardvark Comment which has put forward the view that BECAUSE there is a letters page in *Cerebus*, I am soliciting comments on my work and (therefore) I should either thank the people who criticize my work (graciously) or defend my work (politely). Many of the letters asked the question, 'If Aardvark Comment isn't a solicitation of criticism of my work, then what is it — just a forum for whiny ex-boyfriends and exhibitionists?'

I've covered all of this before, so I hope the long-time readers will bear with me. Aardvark Comment is the readers' forum in *Cerebus*. I pick which letters are printed. Most of the time I could no more tell you WHY I picked one letter and not another than I could tell you why I picked the T-shirt I'm wearing today: I just did, that's all. Some time ago, I discreetly left the letters page, having decided that a readers' forum should be exclusively that. I don't print letters in the middle of the story, so I thought it only fair that I keep my nose out of the readers' forum.

Wrong.

The overwhelming consensus is that I should answer the letters — that the only reason a majority of the readers read Aardvark Comment is because of the answers. So that presents us with a problem. A lot of people see Aardvark Comment as a bear pit or a press conference where I'm supposed to be held accountable for their interpretation of my work. If I don't print these letters, then I'm being a coward. If I print these letters and don't answer them, then I'm avoiding the Inquisition and I'm irresponsible. If I answer the letters politely (no matter what my actual reaction), then I'm being hypocritical. If I answer them honestly, then I'm being rude.

I am interested in getting feedback on the book, whether in reviews or in Aardvark Comment letters. Interested. In the sense of 'Hmm. That's interesting.' I see far more of the reader reflected in a fan letter — pro or con — than I see of myself or the story that I'm writing. There's a story that reflects what I'm saying here better than I'm saying it. Ahem.

Oscar Wilde and James Whistler were at a reception of some kind. Whistler was talking to an art critic from one of the major London newspapers about an article he had done on a recent gallery showing. Whistler was taking him to task for saying, 'This painting was good and this painting was bad.' Whistler made the point that, since the chap was not a painter himself, it would be more accurate for him to say, 'I like this painting and I don't like that painting.' He concluded by saying, 'Come, let's get you a hock and seltzer — you're sure to like that.'

At this point Oscar said, 'I wish I had said that.'

Whistler turned and said, 'You will, Oscar. You will.'

It is significant that the last rejoinder is heard more often than the first part of the story — all the way down to Milton Berle. I think it epitomizes the problem of criticism of any kind. No matter how flowery, how eloquent, how laboriously researched, opinions on creative work come down to 'I liked this' and 'I didn't like that.' I'd even take issue with Whistler on the 'expertise angle'. Just because someone is a comic-book artist or writer, their criticism of *Cerebus*, no matter how well reasoned and meticulously structured comes down to 'I liked this' or 'I didn't like this'.

I don't have a target audience in mind for *Cerebus* when I'm doing it. I want to do *Cerebus* in such a way that I'm happy with it. And I

am happy with it. Sometimes it's popular and sometimes it's unpopular. When I sit down to do it, I sit down to do it the best way I know how, to get it down on paper the closest that I can to how I see it in my head. That's just my personal opinion: This is the best way I know how to do *Cerebus*.

Now the problem with the letters page is that I can either make the letters into raw material for a separate creative work called Aardvark Comment, I can make it exclusively a readers' forum, or I can find something in between. Last issue I printed a bunch of critical letters and didn't answer them. Let's show you a couple of different approaches to answering criticism:

Dear Dave,

All right, it was brilliant, but you must have expected this. *Cerebus* 185, The Viktor Davis...um...bit. It's as if you were literally asking for it.

Woman attracts man, woman absorbs man, woman destroys man. That it? I mean, really, Dave, it's like something out of the Old Testament, and frankly it comes out sounding whiny and pathetic and makes you realize what they mean when chicks on *Oprah* say "Afraid of women," and "scared of intimacy." On what basis do you make these ridiculous statements, either openly or covered by a veneer of admittedly magical prose? Or do you just say these things to provoke people like me?

The section wherein Viktor Davis asks the reader about whether sleeping with the boss is a Bad Thing To Do or not is ridiculous. Firstly, the 'female' reader babbles 'as if possessed by demons' (which of course all females do, right?) a lot of stuff about various circumstances and consequences, and VD (ha) tries in a stupid, annoying, smug way to remove all the various influences (personal, social, etc.) contributing to and resulting from the act, which is ludicrous. Events do not occur in this vacuum, this blank page. If they did, then there would be no moral questions regarding them because they would not affect anything. They would just be so. When does sleeping with the boss equate with (or relate to in any way) sexual harassment? I mean, the question put is, "What do you think of the woman who..." — not the man who makes her. The irrationality that the gibbering

female reader represents, and the ravine that symbolizes it, is a lie or myth. Not all stories are true.

"Women tempt men away from more valuable pursuits into domesticity." Really? This statement is grounded on the assumption that a: men have better things to do than have children, and b: ALL women want domesticity (I don't think ALL women want anything, except for oxygen and the odd meal). You really deserved the cold shoulder for that faux pas.

You then go on to voice the assumption that everyone except you accepts the supposed commendableness of 'Merged Permanence.' Although it's true that the media which dictate society's moods and ideas have pushed this idea consistently and successfully, not everybody has fallen for it, and bachelorhood is still very much romanticized. I myself see little virtue in monogamy.

The idea that there is some inherent, fundamental, pre-existing, irreconcilable rift between man and woman, while very convenient for accommodating your Us-and-Them mentality and presumptions about the female psyche, is absurd and tends to incite in the credulous manes who hang on your every syllable an attitude of hopelessness in those who wish to find some meaningful and mutually satisfactory togetherness.

I hope I haven't been too admonishing or bitchy — I really respect your work, and only really want to communicate my distaste at your apparently sexist views. I hope you won't be too insulted by my letter.

Yours,

Robert Harkin
28 Sheelin Park
Derry
BTU8 OPD
N. Ireland

P.S. You're really coming to Ireland?

It is, indeed, like something out of the Old Testament. I think, historically, what I said in the last part of *Reads* has always been there in most religious texts: a kind of Residue of Gender Origin. The Old Testament is certainly closer to the seminal event than anything we have ready to hand and I tend to credit those things that endure with a good deal more credibility and inherent interpretable content than I do

what 'chicks say on *Oprah*'. I think that a common failing of the Male Feminist is to give equal credence to the Wisdom of the Ages and 'whatever happens to sell a lot of laundry detergent this month'. I was not being 'whiny and pathetic' and this is a good example of where I see more of the reader than myself (or what I've written) in a letter of comment. I say 'these things' on the basis of thought and introspection — an examination of the relationship between males and females shorn of the rhetorical blandishments of each — to the best of my ability. The assumption that I write what I do just to provoke people like you is a perfect example of reader egocentricity. I think you are unable to come far enough out of yourself to examine a new point of view on very old ideas. You rely instead on the emotional reaction that a work creates in you to determine how you 'feel' about the work and then project your own failings onto the work. I outlined the basis of my thinking at great length in *Reads*. On what basis do YOU give greater credence to the endless baffle-gab of *Oprah* over one of the seminal repositories of philosophy which has served for many centuries as a foundation for a great (soon to be formerly great) worldwide civilisation? Name a Great Prophet from anywhere in the Old Testament whose intellect pales beside a housewife with a free ticket for an *Oprah* taping.

'Stupid' it was not. 'Annoying' once again betrays that you are unable to view a reasoned argument objectively; you have to impose your emotional reaction on what you are reading as if your 'feeling' is more important than a coherent argument.

The central point I was making was about a woman 'sleeping with the boss' VOLUNTARILY to get a job. You are so thoroughly indoctrinated with the one-sided view that all job-related sex is harassment that you couldn't see what was plainly in front of you. 'The man who makes her'? Who said anything about the man 'making her'?

'Women tempt men away from more valuable pursuits into domesticity' relative to the Christ in *Last Temptation* was the point that I was making. I think it was the point of the movie. Not that 'all men are Christ' or 'all women want domesticity', but an overall good example of *exceptional* Light

being absorbed and transmogrified by *unexceptional* Voids. 'You really deserved the cold shoulder for that faux pas.' A cold shoulder is an emotional reaction. Not a reasoned rebuttal.

I think 'Merged Permanence' is almost universally approved of by the *Cerebus* readership. I think all of the 'she dumped me, Dave' letters reflect an all-encompassing urge towards 'Merged Permanence' in the majority of the male population which has its origin in the absorption of Reason into Emotion through the acceptance of the female-based compromise that 'we're all just people, right?' I see that as a foolish compromise on the part of men which has led to post-1970 Man (or males, rather) adopting 'Merged Permanence' as a High Ideal instead of a Reason-jeopardizing trap.

'The idea that there is some inherent, fundamental, pre-existing, irreconcilable rift between men and women, while very convenient for accommodating your Us-and-Them mentality...' So far, so good. The first half of this sentence is reasoned and puts forward the hypothesis that I have committed an idea to paper and that this idea is convenient to my idiosyncratic view. '...[A]nd presumptions about the female psyche...' No, no, no. That idea presumes nothing about the female psyche. You've flashed back to the 'all women want domesticity' thing, which I've already refuted. '...[I]s absurd.' HOW is it absurd? I laid out chapter and verse the 'inherent, fundamental, pre-existing, irreconcilable' part and the foundation for it. You can't just pin your own label on it and claim that we've engaged in a rational exchange. Not in a Thinking World, anyway. '...[A]nd tends to incite in the credulous males who hang on your every syllable an attitude of hopelessness in those who wish to find some meaningful and mutually satisfactory togetherness...' On what do you base *this* little piece of intelligence? On what do you base your idea that 'meaningful and mutually satisfactory togetherness' is ruled out of order by what I have written? Warning someone that there are bears in the woods is not the same as forbidding someone to enter the woods. Why do you find ONE example of someone warning men (or, rather, males for the most part) to be wary of women so intrinsically threatening to your

Male Feminist position? I am drastically outnumbered when it comes to the viewpoint I'm putting forward. If it's so fundamentally 'absurd', surely no one will give it another minute's thought. Why is someone who sees merit in my view 'credulous'? Why is a knee-jerk Male Feminist 'enlightened'?

The correct term is 'admonitory'. Since you haven't really said anything apart from a lot of emotional rhetoric, I could hardly be offended. 'Bitchy' is probably not quite the word you wanted — although it does reveal a great deal now that we drag it up onto the sidewalk and have a look, doesn't it?

Okay, now there's a 'thoroughly answered' letter. Too thoroughly answered, from my standpoint, but there's an example. It looks like I'm beating up on him, doesn't it? A 'thoroughly answered' letter is always going to look like that. 'Jeez, Dave, why don't you just take a gun out and shoot the guy?' (Not to belabour the point but that's an emotional reaction to my reasoned reaction.) If I take a letter of criticism and defend my work, that's what it's going to look like. For one thing, the answer can't be that long. The structure of a letters page dictates that the answer has to be shorter than the letter. Why is that? Beats the hell out of me, but that's the way the game is played. Same reason that a judge has the fewest lines at a trial: an implication of hierarchy. The most important one (by implication of the 'bold face last word on the subject', that's M+E* in this case) oversees the whole thing and then tosses off a bon mot or two.

Hey, let's try 'multiple choice':

Dear Dave,

I was just sitting here at my living-room table writing letters to several people that I've met recently while travelling, and although I haven't met you recently, nor will I probably ever meet you, I wanted to write to you. Or, rather, write to the Aardvark Comment (shit, I had to look at how to spell aardvark. Aardvark aardvark aardvark. There. I'll never have to look again). You can comment too, if you like.

So, HERE, in the space provided in your books, lies a perfect

opportunity to vent one's spleen. Now, I haven't exactly got my argument together entirely, but generally it goes like this: Some men feel compelled to protect women. Protect, but not in a physical sense. More at an emotional, sensitive-to-a-woman's-feelings, state-of-mind, etc. type of protection. Some women don't WANT or NEED this. I know I'm being vague. What I'm referring to are casual sexual relationships, and ensuing "breakups". I put breakups in quotes because without quotes there is an implication that an emotionally binding relationship exists. And I wouldn't want readers to INFER this. These "breakups" lead me to suspect that *only* the woman perceives the relationship as casual.

Believe it or not, some women do enter into a "relationship" merely to * * * [my cat just brought a mouse into the house — what a louse] MERELY to FUCK — if I may be so bold. Actually, that's a little crass. Some women would like to have sex on a somewhat regular basis (say, once a week — [No, Dave, don't "SAY" it] — although more is preferable). With — get this — NO EMOTIONAL COMMITMENT! Pretty revolutionary, eh? Some women LOOK for men willing to participate in this heady, devil-may-care (devil make hair), purely physical coming-together of human torsos (i.e., bouts of chicken). And...punfully intended. Some women think they find just this type of co-conspirator. Alas. WRONG. Wrong wrong wrong.

ALL OF A SUDDEN, OUT OF NOWHERE, the guy starts saying things like: "I think things are getting too serious", "We're seeing too much of each other (maybe)", "Maybe we should cool things off FOR A WHILE", "I didn't ask for the anal probe" — oops, I digress. Anyway, essentially, blah, blah, blah. Who the HELL is being serious here?? NOT, I repeat, NOT the woman. Some women have other things on their minds: doing a good job where they work; seeing their friends; ogling and flirting and picking up other men; reading; writing; arithmetic; the TWILIGHT ZONE. WHAT-EVER! What some women DON'T want on their minds is someone who makes more out of a casual sexual relationship than there is, and then proceeds to "ease" the woman's emotional pain during the so-called breakup.

Understand?

We're big girls. We can deal with lot's o' things. Like the mouse that's taken refuge from my beautiful cat Draca, under the fridge. There we go, crisis averted, mouse rescued, cat's hunting impulses thwarted. Next time, she gets to keep the mouse.

At a later date, I'll address the issue of "protecting" women in the case where 'Woman Meets Ex-Boyfriend's NEW Girlfriend.' Frankly, I don't see a problem here, but maybe some men do.

Dave, I'm running out of funky paper. But there's enough left to say "I LOVE CEREBUS". It's THE TRUTH.

OK, bye-bye for now. Love, and other indoor sports!

ANIT

Intellectual Sound-Byte:

I think you'd have to admit that you're very much in the minority and that it's almost impossible to tell you from the rest of the female population.

Smart-Ass Afterthought to Intellectual Sound-Byte:

Maybe you could all wear little badges or something?

Asshole Afterthought to Intellectual Sound-Byte:

Maybe you could all wear little 'Fuck me. I'm easy' badges or something?

Personal reminiscence:

The first time I heard of this happening was a chick who was trying to get rid of this guy who wanted to get into her pants really bad. She pointed out a guy in a bar to her would-be Love Dog and said, 'I'm going to pick him up.' She did so, went to bed with him, case closed. You can imagine her surprise when he turned up on the doorstep at her mother's place (she lived at home) the next day, having played Sherlock Holmes to find out where she lived.

Moral of the Personal Reminiscence:

As long as it remains difficult-to-impossible for the average guy to get laid, you're going to have to suffer the Flypaper Syndrome (for want of a better term).

Flattering:

Maybe you're just such an awesome babe that even the most aloof, casual stud just can't help falling in love with you.

Well, I could do this all day, but I promised you guys would get some of the postponed Gender Wars letters, so get out your helmets and your rhetoric. Here we go:

I love it when my girlfriend gives me earmites.

When I see that line grace the pages in your letters column, I'll send you a little something in the mail.

Direct and to the point because I know you don't have the time to "dick" around. Just remember, "a little something."

(Thank you)

Sorry I postponed the Gender Wars letters again. Can't wait to see the 'little something'. Hope it's his kid sister.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

So, there's twenty thousand of us now in this privileged club? I wonder how the demographics of that work out. Given that it's mostly boys who read comics, I'd expect a gender imbalance, perhaps less than one would get in the general comics readership... But in terms of other variations in the species, if the stats for "transsexuals" (TM copyright *The Great White Medicine Man*) are one in ten thousand, then there must be at least one other out there in *Cerebus* Readers' land. C'mon, **come out, come out wherever you are** (to snatch a gay lib slogan)... It's safe here, *Cerebus* is a hermaphrodite!

Given the "widening gender divide" (or words to that effect) that Dave mentions in the dedication to *Women* (I glanced at the paperback collection, but I was being slightly budget-conscious and postponed its purchase. Look, I've been a monthly buyer since Petuniacon...) ...anyway, it seems to me that we who are transgenders or hermaphrodites or spansexuals can **bridge** this divide ("sex" being from the Latin *seco*, to divide, "spansexual" being made up by me when I realised that to many people "transgender" was defined as a person who transformed their gender, but who still only had one gender at a time).

Yes, I'm totally ignoring those "transsexuals" (TM copyright *Rich Surgeons and Psychiatrists*) who maintain that they are in no way hermaphrodites, being of the one

"true" (TM copyright *Cartesian Dualism*) sex that their bodies must be/have been surgically altered to conform to. What have they got to say about gender that could illuminate us, since they are so trapped in perpetuating gender stereotypes?

Gee, given the revelation of *Cerebus*' hermaphroditism, does that make *Astoria* part *lesbian*? No, no more than it makes my customers (I'm a sex worker), who may assume I'm as female as I generally look, act and feel, part *homosexual* just because in some ways I'm also "masculine" (such as my male skeletal structure, my larynx, my prostate, and my memories of having a penis). (If I'm just being paid to go away afterwards, it's not my life story they're after, so they don't get it.) My point is that divisions based on gender become meaningless here.

Of course, I often get picked by a customer who consciously or unconsciously is drawn to me **because** of my spansexuality, and if a little education about the nature of gender is what he wants, it's what I'll happily give him.

Briefly, the way I see it is this: "Male" and "Female" are as **Yin and Yang** in the diagram, each contained within the other, each endlessly transforming into the other. The more ascendant one is, the sooner the other will gain ascent. They are not polar opposites a world apart, they are both just different aspects of the same whole, separated only by an *imaginary* line. It's not just those who identify as transgender or spansexual who have a balance, equal or not, of **Yin and Yang**, it's actually **all** of us. Which is past where we lost the *Cirinists*, for whom *men* (Yang) will only ever be *just men* (never Yin), and only *Woman* is holy, but not, inasmuch as *Cerebus* is as Dave says he (*Cerebus*) is Dave, past where you, Dave, are.

Hey, I don't want to endanger your macho defensive guy thing women-are-only-good-for-one-thing gig, but, Dave, you've just drawn one hundred and eighty four (at this time) comics about a *hermaphrodite*, man. I mean, isn't something just a tiny bit *queer* (special, outlandish, or, in modern usage, sexually subversive) about that?

Cerebus has been a constant in my life since I was a boy, and that was several sexes and many exes ago. Thanks for making the book good

enough to still be here. (Yeah, so's *X-Men*, but if it's a different artist or writer, it's not really the same book.) And hey, I got to do my personal worldview-rave-thing and talk about the comic!

Yours spansexually,
Norrie-May Welby

(The bald chick who asked about an Aardvark Comment collection at OZCON earlier this year.)

4/22 Orwell Street
Kings Cross
NSW 2011 AUSTRALIA

Not really sure how many spansexuals there are rattling around in the DMZ of the Gender Wars, but it seemed like a good place to start. Special, outlandish or sexually subversive I don't have a problem with. As for 'queer' — why, if youse wuz a REAL man, I'd...I'd...

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave & Ger,

I just wanted to write to you concerning a moral/ethical situation that has been bothering many people for several months now. Many others aren't bothered by it at all; but even pro-gay rights intellectuals are reluctant to take sides in some cases.

The issue involves a New York public-school library purchasing copies of a book called *Becky Has Two Dads*, or something similar, which concerns a child living with her gay father and his lover. Like a lot of people, I was disconcerted by the news that it would be placed within the school library, easily within reach of any child who wanted to pick it up and look at it (let me mention here that it is a picture book, designed, presumably, for beginning readers). I didn't like the idea of kids seeing it.

Now, mind you, I am a lover of personal freedom and I applaud the efforts of gay persons everywhere to fight for social acceptance. I have gay friends and loved ones whom I love very, very much — but, of course, any good Nazi can say, "I have several Jewish friends." Despite all this, the incident of the children's book really bothered me. I couldn't, or didn't, articulate my feelings about it; whether it was just denial, or whatever, I didn't put words to the feelings I had. I suppose I saw it as an effort to 'recruit' young people — to show them, at an early age, that it is OK to be gay.

I do not, even now, personally believe anyone is born gay — and until good, solid scientific evidence proves otherwise, I'll go on believing it. It goes against the most basic Darwinism — organisms who choose not to mate are going to get pushed aside by the good ol' breeders, early in the biological cycle.

But — I digress. I have since changed my mind: I applaud the school officials for putting the book on their shelves.

The first reason has to do with my, personally, putting aside the things I want to believe for the things I ought to believe — common sense would take precedence over wishful thinking. Put another way, I wanted to preserve the good old ideal of the nuclear family, Dad, Mom, and one or two or two-ought-five kids. I wanted to preserve the ideal of it — that it can still exist, and be viable, in modern society. What I failed to consider is that this scene — a kid being raised by two same-sex mates — is a reality for hundreds, perhaps a few thousand, children all over the country. Dreams and ideals are fine — especially ones regarding a loving family — but we're talking reality here: this is how it is in many homes, this is how many children are brought up. To deny that reality is the worst sort of stupidity, the kind of fearful ignorance that has caused a ton of misery over the ages. Like it or not, for many homes it is a real, actual situation. It has nothing to do with how we want it to be. Like Bruce Lee said, "Truth lies outside of fixed patterns."

The second reason has to do with these children on a personal level. As a kid growing up in the late '60s — early '70s, I was a child of divorce; when I would look at the textbooks our school offered up of those pristine, whole families, I felt vaguely resentful and left out. Shouldn't I also expect a child raised by gay parents to feel the same things, only much worse? Looking at his schoolchums' lives, the child sees something different, or perhaps left out, concerning his own home life: and he ends up talking with a therapist about it for years afterward. By denying the reality that such homes exist, we are denying many children the privilege of standing up and feeling proud of their families, and thus themselves; by saying "This doesn't exist," we only offer one more tiny piece of torment to them. Children, to me, are

inviolable, sacred: the less pain we can give them, the better.

Anyway, I just wanted to share that with you. Thanks for a great comic and a darn decent letters column.

Todd Frye
P.O. Box 4262
Harrogate, TN
USA 37752

Was it Buffalo Bill, Butch Cassidy or someone else who once said, 'As long as they don't do it in the street and scare the horses'? I have yet to find a more coherent social philosophy on gay issues.

Dave,

My girlfriend and sometime roommate called me the other day to say that she thinks she is a lesbian. She started to cry and say how she doesn't want to hurt me. I wanted to tell her that she fucking hurt me plenty, but I stopped. It was the tears. Why do I put up with this shit? How would you handle this situation? Why do I feel better when I write to you than when I write my letter to her? And while I'm at it, what is the meaning of life?

See ya.

Robb Turnage

P.S. You're not a God, but it sure is fun treating you like one.

You put up with 'this shit' because you think she's worthwhile sexually and/or personally. You'll continue to put up with it until the shit outweighs the endorphin highs. Doesn't sound like it'll be long now. How would I handle it? I'd warn her that most lesbian lovers (particularly the butch ones) make men look good when it comes to possessiveness, bitchiness, head games and jealousy. At least that's what my bisexual and would-be bisexual girlfriends have told me. You feel better writing to me because I understand you and we're not sleeping together. The meaning of life is excruciatingly unhealthy food when you're hung over and coming in her mouth. You're welcome.

PART ONE: I'M PISSED

Hello. I'd wish I could give some criticism right now, or even compliments. But, you see, I am a tad enraged. If you're wondering why, it's concerning the rhetorical

questions 'Jake' wrote. May I say this so I can get it over with? FUCK YOU! That, and some L7 & Hole has calmed me down a bit. "Why are all girls such stupid pieces of fluff?" he whines. Oh, I'm so sorry! I am now a prisoner of the dreaded XX chromosomes and do not possess the ability to worship your great intelligence, studliness, and hidden godliness. Maybe the reason your relationships last two weeks is 'cause they actually take up the offer to get to know you better! Hey, if you showed appreciation for the female species, they wouldn't fall for guys who aren't afraid to praise or speak truth (or bullshit): basically assholes. And, believe it or not, when chicks say they want to be friends... 98.7666% mean it! It's the guys who just want the thrills and not shared emotions. (Friendship! Say it loud and clear; look it up in the dictionary; ask a girl what it means; soon, you too, will learn the coolness of it!) And do you really want to know why they/we act like they never cared? 'Cause if we did, you'd probably shit all over us, smirking contemptuously and whispering "...luff...".

Thanking you for releasing my teen angst and I hope I answered your questions to your full discontent.

PART TWO: PEN PALS

Recently, my name was published in *Wizard*, like nine months after I sent it in, so the info was kinda outdated. Would you believe that only males responded, and on a slow day, two letters minimum? Oh, and I like to say a cheery hello to Damin J. Toell (even though he hasn't written for a while). Did you like my picture? If any of you guys out there reading this write to me, may your girlfriends (or boyfriends?) be nifty and your pockets full. Do not think I've not noticed the absence of chickie-collectors/readers. Believe me, once you've walked into a store on D&D night wearing a somewhat short dress and having decent looks, you definitely can almost hear a cash register-like "SCHWING!" fill the tensioned air. Hmm... I guess I'm writing this to hear a sympathetic ear that comes from someone who could understand. I'm sorry, I guess that's too much to ask in a male-dominated hobby where women are discussed as objects of "lay"-able art. Dave, I think you're a nice guy and you seem to be the alternative to

"Abby" around here. What can I do? And don't worry, guys. I still covet the last testosterone (you know, the male gland?) in you. I just wish there were a same-sexed reader out there. Teen-aged. Well, thanks for reading my babble.

PART THREE: THANKS!

Every Sunday, I go to this flea market. I am a human and therefore set patterns. I visit the CD stand, the clothes stand, inside music store, instrument dealer, and used books place. Then I go to this comics booth place. These two guys run it, and they're very nice and have excellent taste. They introduced me to *Cerebus* (thus earning the name: Cerebus Girl! Da-da-da-DA!), *Madman*, *Concrete*, and today, *Peep Show*. I trade me greens for dreams, and I hope to perhaps snag that kooky "Cat in the Hat" alarm clock. If you're reading this, I'll probably buy it later. I want you to know I appreciate your guidance into independents and compliments on my high-heeled saddle shoes. May you guys be ginchy and avoid shempishness.

Well, this was my 1st letter to *Cerebus*, and I want you staffers to know that I admire your: artwork/story/originality/ and overall dirtyness.

Later,

Bonnie Raven Gerepkat
376 Stagecoach Road
Freehold, NJ
USA 97728

Well, now. Speaking of Damin:

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

At the end of August, Patricia is leaving. I've only known her since December, but it's killing me.

Back in December, I got a letter printed in Aardvark Comment, and she wrote me a letter. My letter was awful, but she wanted somebody local to correspond with. She enclosed a business card of sorts that her father had made for her in China (at least, that's where I think it was). She didn't give me her telephone number in the letter, but it was on the card. What else is a lonely fanboy to do? Going against what I felt in my gut, I called.

So, as it turns out, Patricia lives about 30 minutes away. Still, we've met face to face only twice. The first time was when she and her boyfriend picked me to go to her house. Soon, we went to *his* house

to play *Dungeons and Dragons*. The second was at my house on the Fourth of July. Hopefully, in a couple of weeks, I'll go to her house to give her her going-away present: *Jaka's Story*. Just call me Pud (by the time Patricia sees this, if ever, she'll know what I mean). Well, I suppose that's really an exaggeration. I've never been obsessed with her, just in need of her.

Most of our "relationship" has consisted of phone calls. Half the time was a discussion of *Cerebus*, *Sandman* and *The Maxx*. The rest was a combination of her telling me her problems with her boyfriend, and me telling her about my problems in school. I've never had any real trouble, but she's been through it before, so she was a source of advice, I guess. Mostly, though, she just told me her problems.

I've always joked with her that I feel like a sounding board. I might've been a sounding board for her, but she was my anchor to reality and a major source of strength. She was also one of the few people to whom I could brag about being a letterhack, without getting strange looks. She understood.

We've had a purely intellectual relationship, nothing physical whatsoever. Really. That's probably what makes it so tough. She's kept my insanity in check (mostly because she could tell me of people who went over the edge), but soon I shall be without an anchor.

It's different when male comics fans correspond. Half the time it's sort of a "well, the letter that I got printed is bigger than yours." For me, to keep in reality, I need to know that female comics fans exist. I've written a couple of letters to some female fans who've gotten letters printed, but nothing local. I'm not sure if I can handle a local relationship of that caliber again, but I suppose I'd jump at the chance to get one. I don't know.

I hope that I don't sound too pathetic. Patricia was always able to sound anything but pathetic. Take the business card, for instance. She wanted me to call her, but she didn't want to sound desperate and just give me her telephone number in an obvious way.

I'm sure that it was all in my head. To her, I've probably been just

another guy, and I'm probably just way too young to handle something so insignificant. Years from now, I'll probably be more embarrassed over this than I will be distraught.

As long as Patricia sees this, I'll be satisfied. Hopefully, she'll have her mother send her the issues of *Cerebus* while she's with her father in the Philippines. I'll keep writing to her while she's there, and I hope to see her next summer.

Well, this letter has helped me come to terms with it all. And, after all, Patricia does have a younger stepsister...

Sincerely,

Damin J. Toell
53 Lockwood Ave.
S. Farmingdale, NY
USA 11735

P.S. Oh, how could I forget? To Patricia R. Fessler: I love you. There are no good-byes, only "I'll see you's." So, Patricia, I'll see you.

You rogue. You've completely forgotten Bonnie, haven't you? How much younger is Patricia's stepsister? Do you have to let her 'ripen on the vine' a while longer? And if things work out with her, won't there just be a lot of rousing discussions at the Fesslers' Christmas table?

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

I've just finished #185 and I must ask:

Whose corpse is that behind you in the photo?

Did it just wash up on shore that way, or...

No... you didn't... Oh my god, Dave, I know it must be irritating for Mr. and Mrs. Lima Bean to flaunt it in front of you like that, but it's no excuse to take it out on the innocent people of San Juan.

Sincerely,

John McCoy
Boston University
School of Management
704 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts
USA 02215

It is my considered opinion that there are no innocent people in San Juan. Just live guilty ones and dead guilty ones. Thus speaks the Donkey.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

Greetings and salutations! I was glad to see you at the Pittsburgh Comicon on April 29. We chatted for a bit, then you did a Lord Julius sketch on my worn copy of *Cerebus Number Zero*. That copy, by the way, has a story to it. You see, this was the very comic that got me started reading about the little guy. Oh, sure, I had heard of *Cerebus* before, but never got around to buying a copy. 'This story has been going on for years,' I thought. 'Who wants to jump in at the middle?' But when *Zero* came out, I thought, 'Aha! A new story line! Here's the chance to get in on the ground floor.'

I was wrong, of course, but loved it anyway. Had to go and buy all of the phone books and even a deck of Diamondback cards. (Wrong again with the cards — I need at least another bloody deck to get a decent game going.) So, to make a short story shorter, your signing my *Zero* meant a lot to me. Thank you.

Enough fanboy crap. If you remember, I told you that I was happily married and as such couldn't possibly write a letter to Aardvark Comment. You said something like "Well, we could always use the minority opinion" or something to that effect.

So here goes — the minority opinion: I was once an adolescent Pud Withers, so I know where the rest of you are coming from. Still am, to some extent. Hopefully someday they'll find a cure. Alcohol helps, but it doesn't cure.

(I had to take a speech class once, and had to get smashed to even consider going, let alone give a speech. Luckily the professor never suspected a thing. But I digress.)

There is hope out there, guys. If you manage to survive those self-destructive urges, time heals. Eventually you will meet someone who doesn't treat you like shit. Hell, it is impossible for every female on the planet to turn you down. It only feels that way. Sooner or later you'll hit the jackpot or go berserk with a gun in a fast-food joint. Whichever comes first. Some girls out there do like sensitive, intelligent guys rather than Mr. Fucking Universe. They're just hard to find, that's all.

Speaking of which, where are the female *Cerebus* fans? There have to be some female 'Puds' out there. How about starting a dating

service, Dave? People who read *Cerebus* should stick together. No one else will.

That's it. Hope I didn't bore anyone. I'll write again if people like hearing from the minority opinion once in a while.

Best wishes,

Tim Edmonson
1625 Potomac Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA
USA 15216

Sounds to me like Damin's way ahead of you, Tim. A one-man Cerebus dating service and every listing has his picture on it. Shame he doesn't get laid, though.

★★★★★★★★

Chris Breach
c/o Aardvark Comment

(Sorry, Dave, this just had to get said.)

Dear Chris,

Just wanted to point out that if we're talking about picking hairs off a person's tongue or hacking them up from the top of the throat, then a case could be made for guys to shave their pubic hair as well... (Not, mind you, that I am advocating this, but I personally like fur.) Besides, you're a free man, you don't *have* to put your mouth down there. If someone enjoys something, they put up with occasional minor discomforts.

Cheers,

Tami Kaplan
629 E. Jefferson St. #1
Iowa City, IA
USA 52245

I just spit 'em back out where they came from. Extra lubrication never hurts when you skip to Act II.

★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

The real reason I'm writing this is because so many of my small-press pals (Hi, Shane! Hi, Eric! Hi, Nik! Hi, Max! Hi, William "Ed"!) have already had letters printed. But if I hurry, maybe I can still beat Tyim (if so: Ha, ha! I beat you, Tyim!).

The excuse I'm using for writing is that some of the letters in #184 got me thinking about some of my own convention experiences. Lisa Baderstadt's comments about the '93 Mid-Ohio Con reminded me that I hadn't ever thanked you. Don Simpson, Larry Marder, Martin Wagner, and James Owen

(hope I didn't forget anyone) for putting on such a terrific Self-Publishing Panel at the con. Really, it was both the most entertaining and informative panel I've ever attended. OK, that isn't saying much — most con panels suck — but, really, it was great. From Don's paper hats to Larry practically screaming about how he got all the production work on *Beanworld* done for free... well, I just wish I'd brought my camcorder. Every aspiring self-publisher I talked to came away from that panel with renewed enthusiasm and sense of purpose. For me, it had the opposite effect: I realized that I was too lazy and dilettantish to ever do comics for a living. But that realization was very liberating: I've carved myself a little niche in the world of mini-comics, and I'm happy to squat here for the foreseeable future. So again, thanks.

On the subject of signings, I confess I am both baffled and enraged by these guys hauling around huge piles of comics to get signed. What's the appeal? Sure, I get stuff signed, but never more than one book per creator. For one thing, it gives me a couple of extra seconds to think of something reasonably intelligent to say (more on this shortly). And, besides, it's a nice souvenir of meeting someone I admire. I'll never forget meeting William Messner-Loeb's at the '92 Mid-Ohio Con. The guys ahead of me in line were all getting multiple *Flashes* and *Wonder Womans* signed... you should've seen his eyes light up when I handed him my *Journey: Tall Tales* trade paperback. He even did a Wolverine sketch inside the front cover. Every time I pull that book out, the memory makes me smile. On the other hand, piling up every book a creator ever wrote or drew and demanding he sign every one is both an imposition on him, and unfair to the people behind you waiting their turn. As far as I'm concerned, the limit ought to be one per customer, period.

No, don't rack your memory, Dave. I didn't come up and introduce myself at the aforementioned panel. Honestly, I was too intimidated. It's easier to write this than say it: you're someone whose talent and integrity I admire enormously. In fact, dare I say it, you're something of a personal hero. But I thought to myself: hey, this is Dave "calls 'em like he sees 'em"

Sim... if I say something gushy and stupid, he'll probably say, "Damn, you're gushy and stupid. Get outta here." So I steered clear. Wait, it gets better.

I just got back from the Chicago con, and naturally there were plenty of creators I wanted to meet. But in a couple of cases, that intimidation factor started tripping me up again. For instance, I wanted to see Colleen Doran, but I'd heard about her bad experiences with predatory males at cons: "Oh, geez, she'll probably think I'm hitting on her and spray me with mace or something..." But on the last day of the con, I finally screwed up my courage and went for it. Not only was Colleen completely sweet and gracious and wonderful, I also had a nice little chat with her mom...turns out she's originally from Cincinnati. Wait, it gets better still.

I also wanted to meet Sean Biern (brilliant talent behind the mini-comics *Jape* and *Cool Jerk and Homogal*), but I'd heard he was kind of snooty and stand-offish, so I hesitated. But, again, I worked up the nerve on the last day. Get this: before I could even introduce myself, he spots my name tag, shakes my hand, and tells me how much he liked the essay I'd written for a fanzine a couple months ago. Am I a schmuck, or what?

Colleen, Sean: I apologize for believing the bullshit I heard about you. You're both tops. And, Dave, I promise, the next con we're both at, I will come up, shake your hand, say something stupid and gushy, and maybe get a book signed. But just one.

An aside to D.E. Smith, who commented on how comics creators are celebrities at conventions, but nobodies in the "real" world: if you think that's weird, try being a mini-comics guy at a convention. Mini-publishers from all over the country whom you've never met before treat you like a long-lost relative, then for the rest of the weekend the fans who paid to get in completely ignore you (or maybe sneer at your little Xeroxed b&w comics as they go by). Talk about an emotional roller coaster.

One more thing, Dave: I'm currently the chairman of the Small Press Syndicate, a mini-publisher support group. Unlike me, a lot of our members want to eventually publish comics professionally, and I think it would do them a lot of good to read your

Notes from the President on the subject. Could I possibly get your permission to reprint a couple of them in our newsletter, the *Rap Sheet*? Specifically, I'd like to run #170 ("Whether to Draw Comics or Become a Plumber") and #182 ("Sincerity Cannot be Faked"). I, and the rest of the club, would really appreciate it.

Thanks. For everything.

J. Kevin Carrier
8913 Eldora Drive
Cincinnati, OH
USA 45236

Anyone is more than welcome to reprint any of the Notes from the President and the Pro/Con speech without permission of any kind. Every little bit helps. Next time it would be much appreciated if you could tell us about your current and/or ex-girlfriend, how often you get laid, etc. No offense, but you sort of stick out like a sore thumb in this issue.

Hey, Dave,

You know, that's not the way I feel...

Nope, that's not it.

That conference in Cairo sure makes you look dumb. A bunch of smart-ass middle-class "murcan women fight for birth control. The two biggest and oldest patriarchies in the world join forces for birth birth birth. And if you really don't think the Pope and all his cronies are patriarchs, just check out how many wives and kids are cluttering up the Vatican.

Darn. Counterexamples got ruled out on page 16. Try this.

It takes a very forgetful reader not to remember where the flower of male-dominated civilization gets us. Or that it took 111 issues of the cock cycle to get to an Ascension and only 75 of the cunt cycle to get us to number two. I think we can now look forward to a cycle of, well, I don't know, intercourse? Maybe Cerebus and Cirin are going to get it on, you know, kinda like that issue of *Swamp Thing* where God and the Big Black Spooky Thing turn into Yin and Yang. That's a good taste barrier you haven't breached yet. For that matter, are there readers out there who don't realize that there's an author somewhere invisible behind the scenes paring his nails. Behind Viktor Davis, Dave Sim. Behind Dave Sim...?

No? Too analytical, okay. Well, remember what old Fred Nietzsche said: rational discussion ain't nothing more than sublimation of a flat-out brawl. So let's keep it down to the level of abuse.

I bet you don't get laid for years now. Not by any woman who *thinks*. Good luck with the cheerleaders!

And, by the way, best issue of *Cerebus* for years. Thanks, Mate! Now can we have our pictures and our story back, please, mister?

Love from all us castrati in corporate publishing.

Paul McEnery
MONDO 2000

P.S. What a bloody co-dependent letter. Might as well write Dear Dave, please suck my brains out with a straw. Never mind, eh.

Ever since the Vatican decided they could boost interest by co-opting the Goddess as the Virgin Mary (some time back), calling them a patriarchy is specious reasoning at best. Look at the agenda: unrestricted childbirth, no contraception, no sex outside of marriage. It's so Cirinist it squeaks.

1996 CEREBUS WORLD TOUR

SCOTLAND

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IRELAND

•

FRANCE

•

ENGLAND

•

GERMANY

•

AUSTRALIA

AND MORE

ANNOUNCING:

SPIRITS of INDEPENDENCE

The following letter was sent to fifty self-publishers in late September. Please feel free to photocopy and distribute this information to any mini-comics or self-publishing creators.

Since we are a little closer to having plans for the 1995 SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE events (of which the Cerebus World Tour will be a part) in place, I thought I'd take this opportunity to update you on our progress.

I've enclosed a list of the events and cities as well as the 'contact name' for each city. The self-publishers named are the local liaisons who will be recommending and/or arranging the site for the event in conjunction with Cory Marder, who has agreed to be the SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE hotel coordinator. She will be back from vacation the first week of October and will be contacting all of the local liaisons at that time. As soon as we have a list of hotels to go with the cities named, we'll be sending out that information to you.

The rate for a table at each of the events is fifteen dollars (U.S.) and it would be much appreciated if we could have as many tables as possible paid for in advance, both to give us a clearer idea of how large a room we are going to need to book and to give us a little cash-on-hand to help with the costs. Most of the financing is going to come from the profits on the Cerebus World Tour Book 1995 (a reprint collection), which will be solicited for February. Depending on how well the book does and how many tables we have commitments for, we hope to be able to subsidize some of the transportation costs and accommodations for as many self-publishers as possible. All excess revenue will be used for this purpose and any profit which remains at the end of the year will be donated to the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund or used to help defray costs of any international SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE events which can be arranged for 1996.

Self-publishers of direct-market comic books (those sold through distributors) and mini-comics creator/publishers will be given priority if there is a shortage of tables for 'last-minute participants'. All comic-book creators in the small press are invited as well.

Each of the local liaisons is being asked to select one or two retailers who will be offered table space to sell and promote self-published and small-press comics as well as 'alternative' comics (*Sandman*, *Moonshadow*, *Maus*, etc.) which don't qualify as self-published or small press but which, in the view of the participating retailer, constitute a 'best foot forward' in exposing the general public to quality comics material. Those self-published and small-press creators who are unable to attend are urged to contact the retailer through the local liaison to arrange to have their material displayed and sold at the individual events. We're also offering the option to participating creators to sell their own material at their table or to display and sell it through the participating retailer. Your choice. I think there is an advantage in having your work connected to and associated with local 'alternative specialist' stores at a standard 40% or 50% discount,

but there's also a great deal to recommend (HAHA) keeping 100% of the profit.

The fifteen dollars per table includes a reasonable number of admissions for people assisting you at your table. We would ask that you limit the size of your entourage to two or three if possible.

Jeff (*Bone*) Smith and Larry (*Beanworld*) Marder will be in charge of publicity and packaging for the events (press releases to the comics press, logo design, etc.). As soon as Jeff finishes a logo design you will be provided with a clear copy to include with any promotions in your own book, a limited edition print you intend to sell at the event(s), your own Tour poster or whatever. Interested self-publishers are encouraged to include the SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE events in any Tour of their own which includes traditional cons and/or store signings. In the case of small-press creators who are promoting an appearance at a SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE event, I'd prefer that the name of the publishing company you're doing business with not appear in connection with it (i.e., Evan Dorkin and/or MILK & CHEESE participating, rather than Slave Labor Graphics).

All creators participating are encouraged to have some kind of flyer or form letter at their tables which can be handed out to interested retailers, probably with a sample autographed copy, outlining your direct-order trade terms and a list of material that you have available as well as the trade terms and list of material available from any publisher with an inventory of your work. The local liaisons are being asked to supply a list of retailer addresses and store names from their local Yellow Pages. All local retailers will be admitted free.

We'll be going on the assumption that each event will consist of a minimum of forty tables. If there are only ten or twenty tables sold for the event, each participating creator will be given proportionately extra display space (i.e., if only ten tables are sold, each creator will get four tables to display comics, artwork, T-shirts, etc.). We'll be asking the local retailers in these cases to supply reliable assistants to help manage the tables to discourage any 'five-finger discounts' on comics artwork, T-shirts, etc.

I've included a list of addresses and phone numbers (as well as fax numbers where I have them) for all of the self-publishers and cartoonists that I have on my mailing list. Since I haven't asked anyone's permission to include their phone numbers, I'd ask that you write or fax anyone you want to contact first to find out if a phone call is 'cool'. Obviously the list is incomplete and I'm encouraging everyone to do their own mailing to the cartoonists they think would be interested in one or more of the events. I'd ask you to bear in mind that the idea behind the SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE is an event by, for and about creators. A creator doing an anthology title who is

also the publisher is encouraged to participate along with the creators working on the anthology. Publishers of anthologies who do not do any creative work on them are encouraged to sponsor a table for the creators who do work on the title (i.e., Joe Pruett would display as a writer on **NEGATIVE BURN**, not as the publisher of the title and, hopefully, would only display those issues which feature his work or the work of these creators who attend an event with him).

I realize this probably sounds like forensic hair-splitting (it is), but I'd really like to avoid getting bogged down in any gray areas that would be contrary to the spirit of **SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE**.

Some tentative work has been done on arranging warehouse appearances connected to the events (this falls under the jurisdiction of packaging and promotion: Jeff Smith and Larry Marder), contingent upon convenience for the local warehouse manager for the Thursday or Friday before the event. Both Gerhard and myself will be flying in for the event on the Thursday before and flying out the Monday after. Those interested in getting together with other self-publishers should contact the local liaison so they can be included in the get-togethers Thursday, Friday, Saturday and/or Sunday. Probably just the bar or restaurant in the hotel. Since the planning on these events is centered on the **KISS (Keep It Simple, Stupid)** theory, I hope that the get-togethers will allow for an exchange of ideas on how the remaining events can be improved without cutting into our writing and drawing time collectively.

I've had an overture from a student group at the University of Oklahoma to put on a **SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE** event. I'd prefer for the time being to keep things limited to the once-a-month schedule, but it does seem to indicate the possibility of extending the program into 1996 and including centers which are going to be missed this time around. I think we have a good representation in various regions on the list, but I'm pretty certain we'll find a few undiscovered 'hotbeds' in the course of 1995 which can be pursued in 1996 and beyond.

For the time being, I'd ask you to get together your own mailing list of those participants-in-waiting which are not included here. Feel free to photocopy this information or rephrase it in your own letter as well as forwarding all future correspondence into photocopy form. I think this will work better than some humongous 'master list', saving wear and tear on the Aardvark Vanaheim photocopier (which has seen better days) and postage meter. I think if all of you limit yourselves to a half-dozen or dozen potential candidates and encourage them, in turn, to contact a half-dozen or a dozen potential candidates, that should cover the self-publishing, mini-comic and small-press communities as thoroughly as could be hoped.

To reserve a table or tables for each and any of the **SPIRITS OF INDEPENDENCE** events, please send a cheque for fifteen dollars (per table) U.S. to:

AARDVARK VANAHEIM, Inc.
Box 1674 Station C
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2
ATTN: Dave Sim

I'll notify Cory and the local liaison that you have a table booked. If possible, I'd like to have all of the reservations in hand by November 30 so we know how big a deal we're...uh...dealing with. If you plan to attend more than one event and haven't gotten the cash flow to reserve all of the tables you're going to

need, send a cheque for one event and a schedule or date when we can expect the balance of payment for the others. We'll hold your table until that date.

Although Ger and I won't be doing any store signings, there is a good possibility that you could get a retailer to help with your expenses if you contact him or her about a Friday night signing. We'll try to get a list of local retailers out with the next mailing.

That's about it. Feel free to write to me at the address above or fax me at (519) 576-0955 with any comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,
Dave Sim

LOCAL LIAISONS:

FEBRUARY 25, 1995 — AUSTIN, TEXAS

Martin Wagner, *Hepcats*
P.O. Box 27157, Austin, TX 78755-2157

MARCH 25, 1995 — COLUMBUS, OHIO

Jeff Smith, *Bone*
P.O. Box 16973, Columbus, OH 43216

APRIL 15, 1995 — SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

Drew Hayes, *Poison Elves*
P.O. Box 5844, Bellingham, WA 98227-5844

JULY 1, 1995 — MANCHESTER, VERMONT

Steve Bissette, *Tyrant*
P.O. Box 442, Wilmington, VT 05363

AUGUST 12, 1995 — CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

Larry Marder/*Tales of the Beanworld*
Chicago, IL

SEPTEMBER 9, 1995 —

PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Don Simpson, *Bizarre Heroes*
P.O. Box 44326, Pittsburgh, PA 15205

OCTOBER 7, 1995 — PHOENIX, ARIZONA

James Owen, *Starchild*
P.O. Box 40904, Mesa, AZ 85274

NOVEMBER 4, 1995 —

KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

Richard Corben, *Den*
P.O. Box 8632, Kansas City, MO 64114

DECEMBER 2, 1995 — KITCHENER, ONTARIO

Dave Sim, *Cerebus*
P.O. Box 1674, Station C,
Kitchener, ON, CANADA N2G 4R2

MAILING LIST:

**not really a self-publisher but too cool to leave off the list*

*Chester Brown, Paul Pope, John Picacio, Fernando Ramirez, Barry Blair, Alex Robinson, Randy Reynaldo, Teri S. Wood, Colleen Doran, Eric Hess, Lawrence Klimecki, Rick Veitch, *Evan Dorkin, Isaac Priestly, Monique McNaughton, Michael Cohen, Hanther, Steve Lafler, Roberta Gregory, Bob Corby, Batton Lash, *Phil Foglio, Budd Root, Terry Moore, John Petropoulos, Mark Sexton, David Zapanta, Jim Pustunno, Bill Tucci, Patrick Connors, Mark Wheatley, Paul Grist, Jason Lutes, Shane Simmons, Marc Harwell, Monte Wilson, Rick Molchan, Brian Clifton, Jeff Harris, John Mitchell/Jana Christy, Colin Upton, Bob Schrab, Bryan Glass.

A CEREBUS PREVIEW

I remember when the first issue of David Zapanta's *Hairbat* came in. I remember because I had been thinking around that time that it was interesting that comic books had really not explored the 'finite palette' approach to storytelling — that is to say, a story which consists of a finite number of elements and which concerns itself with examining the implications of those elements rather than adding to them. One of the reasons (I'm sure) is that such concepts tend towards the juvenile (*Archie* comes to mind) or the finite elements become secondary to the execution and form (*Krazy Kat*). The original series was four issues in length, as is the current sequel 'Home Sweet Home'. Within the confines of his self-imposed limitations, David Zapanta has definitely captured my attention (and Gerhard's as well). The book is about illusion and reality, alienation, absurdity, hero-worship. It's poignant, sad, intriguing and (very often) funny as hell. Larry Powell is either mad as a hatter or he's the only sane one in the book. I find myself changing my opinion from issue to issue (sometimes from one page to the next). Call it allegory, call it fantasy, call it psychodrama, *Hairbat* (to me) is a book on the borderline between what is and what isn't. It says a number of things that evade easy labeling, categorization and explication. In short, it's what self-publishing is all about.

Single issues of *Hairbat* are available from Screaming Rice Press, 256 Washington St., Tappan, NY, 10983 for \$2.50 U.S., \$3.25 Canadian plus .75 each for postage.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. David Zapanta's *Hairbat* preview, which should give you a clearer idea of what this book is all about.

Not a *clear* idea, you understand. Just *clearer*.

DAVID ZAPANTA'S HAIRBAT



Traumatized by the death of his father in a freak hair-cutting accident, Larry Powell is now too afraid of cutting his hair, even if it means freeing him from the clutches of his malicious Hairbat.

The following is an excerpt from Part One of HAIRBAT: HOME SWEET HOME, the newest mini-series from SCREAMING RICE PRESS...







... I ASSURE
YOU, MR. POWELL,
THAT PRESENT
CONDITIONS WILL
NOT IMPROVE AS
LONG AS YOUR ...



...AH...



... 'CONDITION' ...

... PERSISTS.

BUT
I'M NOT
CRAZY!

CONTRARY TO WHAT
YOU MAY BELIEVE,
LITTLE MAN --

-- I AM
NOT THE
ONE HOLD-
ING YOU
CAPTIVE.



EVERY TIME I TRY
TO GET OUT, THEY
PULL ME BACK IN!!



BUT!

PERHAPS SOLITARY
CONFINEMENT IS
NOT THE ANSWER ...



NO...
PER-
HAPS
NOT...

... MAYBE
WE SHOULD
START YOU
ON MEDI-
CATION...

AA
OO

YEAH!



NO!

... OR BEGIN
E.S.T...



'E.S.T.?'



ELECTRO

SHOCK

THERAPY.



WHOA!

WAITA-
MINNIT
HERE!!

NO!



NOW NOW, MR. POWELL--
YOU HAVE NO CHOICE.

AFTER ALL, **I**
AM THE HEAD OF
THIS PSYCHIATRIC
DEPARTMENT--

-- AND YOU ARE !!!
YOU ARE MERELY--

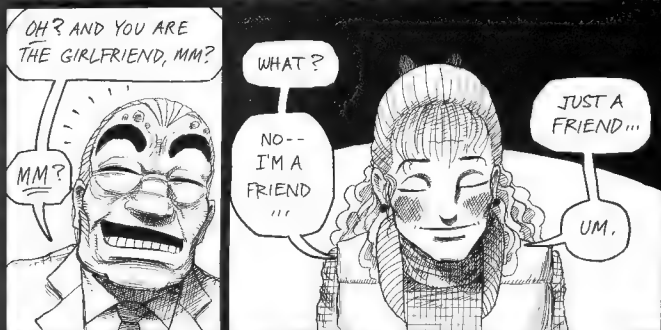
-- THE PATIENT.



HEY, DOC!

LOOK--I'M
NOT DEAD!!











(OH GOD, MOM--PLEASE!)

I WISH YOU WOULD'VE DISCUSSED YOUR DECISION TO PURSUE MENTAL ILLNESS AS A CAREER WITH ME FIRST!...



CEREBUS WORLD TOUR BOOK 1995

FEATURING:

•
THE NAME OF THE GAME IS
DIAMONDBACK

•
THE MORNING AFTER

•
WHAT HAPPENED BETWEEN
ISSUES TWENTY
AND TWENTY-ONE?

•
MAGIKING

•
SILVERSPOON

•
A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

•
CEREBUS DREAMS

•
AND:



by
Chester Brown & Dave Sim



CEREBUS WORLD TOUR 1995

